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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 002576

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2016

TAGS: PGOV KS  
SUBJECT: BLUE HOUSE STANDS BY "AUTO-PLAGIARIZING" EDUCATION  
MINISTER

Classified By: A/DCM Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

**¶1.** (U) SUMMARY: Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Education Minister Kim Byong-joon faces widespread criticism for his alleged plagiarism and admitted publication of same articles in different journals. President Roh continues to back DPM Kim, and Blue House officials said the charges are not matter for dismissal. However, this support is not what it appears to be; DPM Kim will probably have to resign for a relatively small offense. END SUMMARY.

**¶2.** (U) Opposition parties, civic groups, academics, and even members of the ruling party have all called for the resignation of newly appointed Education Minister and DPM Kim Byong-joon over controversial academic practices while he was a professor at Kookmin University. DPM Kim has apologized, given explanations, and called for a National Assembly hearing, but so far has refused to resign. Blue House spokesman Chung Tae-ho said there is no change in the Blue House's support for Minister Kim. Opposition GNP lawmakers have demanded a dismissal motion in the Assembly and the Democratic Party (DP) went one step further and demanded Kim "not bring his moral defects to burden the government and the people."

#### THE ALLEGATIONS

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**¶3.** (U) There are two different allegations. First, Kim is criticized for "auto-plagiarism:" publishing the same article in two separate academic journals, one for the Korea Local Autonomy Society in 1998 and one in Kookmin University's Social Science Institute Journal in 2000. The articles on the topic of local autonomy had minute changes and different titles. Minister Kim apologized for publishing the same article "by mistake," claiming that a graduate student changed the title without his knowledge. Critics note that he published the second article with funds from a government-funded research project, the "BK (Brain Korea) 21." From 1999 to 2002, he and his colleagues received 207 million won in BK21 projects. He also received 4.5 million won from the Korea Research Institute to publish the first paper. Plus, he is accused of plagiarizing from the thesis of one of his students for his paper. He denies this charge and has requested that the Korea Association for Public Administration examine the charges.

¶4. (U) The second allegation is that the head of the Seongbuk-gu ward office received his PhD under Minister Kim at Kookmin University while supplying funding from the ward for Kim's research. The Seongbuk-gu ward office funded Kim's research with 150 million won, but Kim listed the support received as 4.7 million won in his profile.

¶5. (U) Earlier this month, President Roh appointed Kim as Education Minister and Deputy Prime Minister despite wide opposition from even his own Uri party because of Kim's record as the architect of the controversial real estate reform policies. Civic groups, such as the National Association of Professors for Democratic Society, an organization of progressive professors, opposition party members, and Uri party members have all urged Minister Kim to resign for what they are calling unethical and immoral practices.

ENOUGH TO WARRANT RESIGNATION?

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¶6. (U) In the U.S., it is assumed that a journal publishing an academic paper has exclusive rights. If there were ever a case of publishing the same paper, the second journal would include a disclaimer stating as much. Although Lee Nae-young, an international relations professor at Korea University, told poloff that Korean academic standards might not be as strict as American standards, this is still "not acceptable." Another professor, reputed GNP guru and Seoul National University professor Park Sae-il, noted that although the allegations are not illegal, they are unusual. As to whether the allegations are serious enough to warrant calls for his resignation, Prof. Park told poloff, "it's Minister Kim's decision" whether to resign or not.

COMMENT

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¶7. (C) Given Roh's weakness in the polls and complete lack of support in the National Assembly, the opposition smells blood and are going hard after DPM Kim. Even though this is a relatively minor offense compared to some of the corruption offenses that stain other Roh cronies, the GNP and many ruling party officials are determined to take Kim down. With Uri officials jumping on the anti-Roh bandwagon and the DP fresh from their by-election win and ready to take a swing at Roh, the stage is set for an ugly showdown that seems likely to lead ultimately to Kim's resignation. If a dismissal motion were to come to the floor of the National Assembly, there would be more than the necessary 150 votes needed to dismiss Kim. END COMMENT.

YUN